DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 102 704 EA 006 825

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TITLE The Relationships Among Dogmatism, Administrative Style, Autonomy, and Decision-Making of Aspiring and Practising School Principals.
PUB DATE Apr 75
NOTE 5p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (60th, Washington, D.C., March 31-April 4, 1975)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS Administrative Personnel; *Administrator Attitudes; Administrator Characteristics; Administrator Responsibility; Behavior Patterns; Decentralization; *Decision Making; *Educational Research; Elementary Secondary Education; Leadership Responsibility; *Leadership Styles; Participation; *Principals; Teacher Administrator Relationship; Values

ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between a certain characteristic in the personality of the school principal and his administrative behavior, with the ultimate dependent variable being decentralization of decisionmaking. The focus was on the relationships between dogmatism, Xness of administrative style, autonomy in decisionmaking, and decentralization of decisionmaking. (Author)

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THE RELATIONSHIPS AMONG DOGMATISM, ADMINISTRATIVE STYLE, AUTONOMY AND DECISION-MAKING OF ASPIRING AND PRACTISING SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

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AERA Presentation
Washington, D.C.
April 1975

ED102704

Objectives.

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between a certain characteristic in the personality of the school principal and his administrative behavior, with the ultimate dependent variable being decentralization of decision-making. The focus was on the relationships among dogmatism, Xness of administrative style, autonomy in decision-making and decentralization of decision-making. A subsidiary focus of the study was to discover whether differences existed between aspiring and practising school principals with respect to the four principal variables. The study specifically examined the following relationships: a) the relationship between dogmatism and Xness of administrative style; b) the relationship between dogmatism and decentralization of decision-making; c) the relationship between Xness of administration style and decentralization of decision-making; d) the relationship between autonomy in decision-making and Xness of administrative style; e) the relationship between dogmatism and autonomy in decision-making; and f) the relationship between autonomy in decision-making and decentralization of decision-making.

Theoretical Framework.

The supporting rationale for this study rests on three theoretical foundations. The first is a conception of administration as a series of superordinate-subordinate relationships within a social system, as formulated by Getzels and Guba[1]. The second is McGregor's[2] Theory X and Theory Y assumptions of human behavior, and the third is Rokeach's[3] theory of belief systems as put forward in his discourse on dogmatism.

[1] Getzels, J.W. and Guba, E.G. "Social Behavior and the Administrative Process." School Review, No. 65 (1957), 423-41.

[2] McGregor, D. The Human Side of Enterprise. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1960.

[3] Rokeach, M. The Open and Closed Mind. New York: Basic Books Inc., 1960.

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The hypotheses emerging from the theoretical bases attempted to relate these theoretical constructs to administrative behavior with respect to autonomy in decision-making and decentralization of decision-making in the simulated role setting. Administrative behavior was identified through the use of simulated materials developed for the roles being studied.

Data Source.

One hundred and eighty students enrolled in Educational Administration courses at OISE formed the sample for this study. The sample comprised 30 principals, 41 vice-principals, 26 department heads, 56 teachers, and 27 "others" made up of assistant professors, consultants, administrative officers, and divisional chairmen of community colleges. A further seventy-five subjects drawn from principals of elementary schools in Ontario served as a control group. Each subject from the experimental group responded to four questionnaires which measured the three independent and one dependent variables. Each subject in the control group completed only the Dogmatism Scale.

Methods.

The use of simulated materials constituted the method of data collection for the administrative behavioral aspects of the study. Analysis of variance was used to determine whether there were significant differences among the five sub-groups that constituted the sample, and the Gamma coefficient was employed to determine the strength of the relationships. A path analysis structure was used to direct the testing.

Results.

The following hypotheses and corollaries were confirmed at the .05 level of significance.

Hypotheses

1. There will be a positive relationship between the degree of dogmatism of school principals and the Xness of their administrative style.

2. There will be a negative relationship between the Xness of the administrative style of school principals and their decentralization of decision-making.

3. There will be a negative relationship between the degree of Xness of administrative style and the degree of decentralization of decision-making for low dogmatic school principals.

4. There will be a negative relationship between the Xness of administrative style of school principals and their degree of autonomy in decision-making.

Corollaries.

1. There will be a positive relationship between the degree of autonomy in decision-making of school principals and their decentralization of decision-making.

2. There will be a positive relationship between the degree of autonomy in decision-making and their decentralization of decision-making for high dogmatic school principals.

3. There will be a positive relationship between the degree of autonomy in decision-making and their decentralization of decision-making for low dogmatic school principals.

No relationship was found to exist between the following: dogmatism and decentralization of decision-making; dogmatism and autonomy in decision-making. No significant differences were found among the five sub-groups of principals, vice-principals, department heads, teachers and "others", on the four principal variables--dogmatism, Xness of administrative style, autonomy in decision-making and decentralization of decision-making. There was also no significant difference in dogmatism between the experimental and control groups.

Conclusion.

It was concluded that a certain personal characteristic--dogmatism--of the school principal is positively related to his Xness of administrative style. However, the degree of autonomy invested in him to make decisions is negatively related to his Xness of administrative style, which in turn determines the extent to which his subordinates participate in the decision-making process. His autonomy in decision-making is positively related to his decentralization of decision-making. In totality, the administrator's overall behavior is seen to depend not only on personal characteristics but in part on other administrative factors.

Educational Importance of the Study.

These findings have significant implications for selection and training procedures. They point to the need for prospective school administrators to undergo appropriate training. The implications can be summarized as follows:

1. The study has shown that when administrators are subjected to training programs, they tend to adopt styles that will reflect the current educational practices and trends. The implication of this is that policies should be adopted that will ensure adequate training for the would be administrator, and that administrators now on the job, who lack the necessary training, should be encouraged to embark on training programs in educational administration. This will help them acquire the necessary skills and be conversant with the recent techniques that facilitate the effective administration of a school. Once this is attained, and while some of the individual's personal characteristics will have some little influence on his administrative behavior, he will be guided more by his acquired skills and training.

2. Perhaps the only aspect of the school principal's administrative behavior that is influenced by a certain characteristic in his personality is his Xness of administrative style. The possibility that other factors may be related to personality has relevance for recruiting authorities who in the past have tended to reject potential administrators because they showed signs of dogmatism. It has been demonstrated that in the areas of autonomy in decision-making and decentralization of decision-making, the dogmatism present in the individual's belief system has little influence on his administrative behavior.

3. It stands to reason therefore, that a highly dogmatic school principal with the necessary administrative training should not be barred from administrative appointments, since his degree of dogmatism will not affect all aspects of his administrative behavior. Instead it would appear that future administrators will stand a better chance of being effective if, prior to their appointment, they are given the basic training. The findings may have relevance for school boards tempted to deprive principals of autonomous powers necessary to cope with the complexities of school administration. If school administrators are given the necessary autonomy, then they have freedom to allow subordinates and others to help shape the objectives of the school.

4. The results suggest that aspiring principals are no different from practising school principals in administrative behavior when subjected to the same training programs. If the person selected has had sensitive and articulated educational experiences, can make administrators decisions based on his commitment to, and understanding of, educational processes and at the same time influence behavior, then he has the prerequisites to manage well.